



PRESENTS



WINTER 1978

AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITORS

The Parnassus staff is glad for the opportunity to present to our readers, in co-operation with the students in Gene Boles' playwriting course, some examples of their work.

The following pages contain, we believe, some of the most creative writing that has been submitted to our office this semester. Mr. Boles led his class through a series of assignments, each more demanding than the last, and we present these samples in the order they were given.

We sincerely hope that you will find them both entertaining and a source of inspiration to submit some of your short stories, poems, sketches, and photos for our Spring 1979 issue.

The students in the playwriting course are:

Gladys Fish	Donna Panneton
Reggie Gribenas	Jim Rae
Steve Kehoe	Merry Souther
Kevin Maloney	Tom Vittorioso
Ann Young	

The Parnassus editorial staff for the Fall 1978 semester is:

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For their first assignment, the class was to create, in the minds of the audience, an interest in an off-stage dog . . . and here is how three students handled it . . .

STORY I

CHARACTERS: Mrs. Helen Cabot, a widow.
Nancy Cabot, her daughter, age fifteen.
Richard Cabot, Nancy's twin.
Timmy Cabot, brother, age ten, leg in a cast.

SCENE: The patio of the Cabot house, situated in one of the better suburbs. A fine morning, the Cabots are eating breakfast. Mrs. Cabot is opening her mail.

NANCY: Anything interesting in the mail, Mom?

MRS. CABOT: No, just the light bill and a couple of ads. Sit up straight, Timmy!

RICHARD: (picking up and passing an envelope) Here's one you missed, Mom. Hey! Can I have the stamp? It's from Australia. I need it for my collection of animal stamps. This one has a dingo on it.

NANCY: Australia....who do you know in Australia, Mom?

MRS. CABOT: Nobody that I know of. Unless...didn't the Reverend Nielsen say he was going to Australia?

NANCY: No, not Australia. Africa, I think.

(Mrs. Cabot takes out the letter and lays down the envelope.)

TIMMY: (to Richard) What's a dingo?

RICHARD: It's a type of wild dog that lives in Australia. (he picks up the envelope and shows Timmy the stamp) See, they're yellow and about so high. (he gestures toward knee level)

TIMMY: Are they friendly?

RICHARD: Well, the wild ones are pretty vicious but they can be tamed.

TIMMY: Wow! Would one make a great pet! Just think what the other kids would say!

(Mrs. Cabot, reading the letter, gives a slight gasp and looks annoyed)

NANCY: Who's it from, Mom? Bad news?

MRS. CABOT: It's from my Uncle Henry.

RICHARD: Uncle Henry? Isn't he the one Grandpa won't talk about and says is an embarrassment to the family? I've heard you and Grandpa talking about him. What did he do that's so bad, rob a bank or something?

NANCY: Yeah, Mom. What did Uncle Henry do? And why is he writing to you?

MRS. CABOT: Oh....Uncle Henry and your Grandpa had a fight about the family business. Uncle Henry refused to go into it. And besides, there was Uncle Henry's other....anyway, he says he is coming here to visit when he gets back from Australia. He was down there on business. He wants to stay while he meets a business contact in town. He says since he can't stay at a hotel, he can stay with us and meet you kids.

RICHARD: Why did he say he can't stay at a hotel?

MRS. CABOT: He says he has his dog with him and hotels don't take pets. Oh, no! I hope....

NANCY: You hope what, Mom?

TIMMY: Hey, Mom! Is Uncle Henry really going to bring his dog here? Can I play with it? Now I can really have fun.

RICHARD: Mom, what do you mean? You hope what?

MRS. CABOT: Yes, Timmy. Uncle Henry does say he's bringing his dog. And when he gets here this afternoon, you ask him if you can play with it.... I only hope....

RICHARD: You hope what? You said it again, Mom. Is there something wrong with Uncle Henry's dog?

NANCY: Mom, does this have anything to do with Uncle Henry's "other" as you started to say earlier?

MRS. CABOT: Hurry up, you two. You'd better leave now or you'll be late for your tennis lessons. Goodbye.

RICHARD: But, Mom!!

MRS. CABOT: Off you go now. Goodbye! Have fun!
(Nancy and Richard get up to leave)

RICHARD: Anyway, Nancy, we can find out all about Uncle Henry's dog this afternoon.

NANCY: (calling over her shoulder) Mom! What time is Uncle Henry getting here?

MRS. CABOT: He doesn't say. Just that he'll make his own way here. Goodbye.

RICHARD & NANCY: Goodbye, Mom. 'Bye, Timmy.

TIMMY: 'Bye.

(Richard and Nancy exit. Mrs. Cabot rereads her letter, looking worried)

TIMMY: Mom, can I have a dog like Uncle Henry's?

MRS. CABOT: (sharply) No! (recovering) We'll see about a dog after Uncle Henry leaves. Right now I have to get a room ready for him. Why don't you go play?

TIMMY: Okay, Mom. (he picks up his crutches and starts for the yard)

Mom, is there anything wrong with Uncle Henry's dog?

(as though trying to convince herself) Of course not. Run along now.

MRS. CABOT: (Timmy leaves. Mrs. Cabot reads the letter again, then folds it and as she exits into the house)...

MRS. CABOT: I only hope...

by Steve Kehoe

STORY II

SCENE: A kitchen, where an overweight women of about forty sits with a red-vested, white French poodle on her lap. She alternately feeds herself and the dog candy. The kitchen is furnished with two chairs and a table centerstage, with a sink stage right, counter and cabinets left. There is a TV in front of the chairs.

GRACE: Walter, Walter.... It's getting late. Better get in here and start the sauce for dinner.

WALTER: (entering) Do this, do that. Can't you do a damn thing?

GRACE: What do you mean by that?

WALTER: You sit there in front of the TV stuffing your dog-face.

GRACE: What?

WALTER: I mean yours and the dog's face.

GRACE: Shut up and make the sauce, idiot! (to the dog) Oh, my baby. Daddy is so mean.

WALTER: And I ain't that bloody dog's father.

GRACE: (covering the dog's ears) Ssshh! Don't let him know he's adopted.
(Walter walks away shaking his head. He prepares to make the sauce. There's a knock. The dog jumps to the floor)

GRACE: Answer the door, fool (to the dog) Come here, baby.

SALESMAN: Good day, sir. Would you be interested....

WALTER: No!!

GRACE: Who's there?

SALESMAN: But every house....

WALTER: I said no!!(he slams the door in the salesman's face)

SALESMAN: Yeeeowww!

GRACE: Who was that? What did they want? (picks up dog) Here to Mommy.
(to Walter) Well....Are you going to answer me, jerk?

WALTER: It was a giant kitty cat looking for a French dog.

GRACE: Why would a cat want a French dog?

WALTER: (Aside....but a bit too loud) To show some tricks.

GRACE: I heard that. (she covers the dog's ears) Get back to the stove you...you pig.
(Walter goes back to work, but has problems: the cans will not open, sauce sticks, cans fall into pot. The dog playfully runs around Walter's feet.He is losing patience....the phone rings.)

GRACE: Answer that phone....dummy.

WALTER: Hello. No, I think you have the wrong number.

GRACE: Who do they want? Maybe I know who they want. Tell me, fool, tell me.

WALTER: Sorry, can't help you.

GRACE: Can't help! What do you mean? Who's on that phone idiot? Tell me.

WALTER: (The call has been disconnected, but he talks on.) You're looking for a white French poodle?

GRACE: Who's looking?

WALTER: I'm not sure.

GRACE: Whats going on?

WALTER: You mean the dog gave this address?

GRACE: Oh, my God!

WALTER: What actually happened? The dog stole a car?

GRACE: No!

WALTER: And then he pulled an armed robbery....at the fire station....took all the fire hydrants?

GRACE: No! No!

WALTER: Well, officers, I'll be on the lookout. Goodbye....Damn it, the sauce is burning.

GRACE: The hell with the sauce. My baby!

WALTER: (Picks up pot, burns hands, grabs pot with shirt and heads for the sink. The dog trips him and he falls covered with sauce.) I'll kill that mutt! (to dog while shaking his finger) See what you did! (dog bites finger) That did it! Into the pot you go. (he stuffs the dog into the pot, covers it, and puts it on the stove.)

GRACE: What are you doing?

WALTER: Right now, I'm going to put this apple into your mouth....and stuff you in the oven.

GRACE: Have you gone mad?

WALTER: Yes!!! (the lights fade as Walter struggles with Grace)

by Reggie Gribenas

STORY III

CHARACTERS: Ben, an old shoe-maker
Etta, his wife in her mid-60's
Miranda, their ten-year-old daughter

SCENE: A cold winter day, Ben and Etta are riding in their wagon.
A large Scotch Pine is loaded on the back of the wagon.

ETTA: Why has Miranda acted so strangely lately? A day before Christmas and she doesn't have enough spirit to pick out a tree with us.

BEN: No need to worry. Mary moved away last week. She and Miranda were quite close. The other children at school were never around. She'll enjoy putting up the Christmas tree.

ETTA: We have lots of lovely ornaments that I've collected for years....and the tree will be so bright. (slowly) Ben, there has to be something more than that for our little girl....something that will bring her great joy.

BEN: Great things are very expensive....and we have very little money. Business was poor this year and the crops didn't yield very much.

ETTA: (securing her scarf) But there are many inexpensive things that can bring years of amusement. I know Miranda would be overjoyed with a new puppy.

BEN: A puppy? Why, that's another mouth to feed.

ETTA: I'm sure it would bring her out of this depression she's in and she could get a job after school helping Mrs. Miller stack the hats in her hat shop.

BEN: B-r-r-r. Very cold day. It can't be anymore than twenty degrees.

ETTA: Don't change the subject, now. This is very important.

BEN: I'm sorry, Etta. There's no use in arguing. You see....I've already had that great idea. Mr. Grey has a daughter about the same age as Miranda. He and I have already bought a beautiful pup for the two girls to raise.

ETTA: (sighing) Oh, Ben! I thought you'd never give in. It's the perfect idea. It'll give Miranda a chance to make new friends. She'll be back to normal in no time.

BEN: The pup's down at my workshop. I've been feeding him, but he'll have to stay there tonight. I'll surprise her with it when you're both decorating the tree.

ETTA: What do you think she'll name him? (They kiss, and he puts his arm around her.) Merry Christmas, dear.

BEN: Merry Christmas!

(As they pull up to the House, Miranda is outside waving to them.)

by Merry Souther

. . . .the second assignment required the creation of a scene in which space [location] was the primary motivation for the characters. Here is how one student treated it:

SETTING: A funeral home where two women in their seventies are sitting, talking.

ERMA: Doesn't Marge look wonderful?

GERTRUDE: The best she's looked in years!

ERMA: I never saw a prettier dress on her.

GERTRUDE: I never saw a pretty dress on her.

ERMA: At least for once, she's got a nice hair-do.

GERTRUDE: (Sighing) Poor Marge.

ERMA: At least she went peacefully.

GERTRUDE: If I had a choice, I'd want to go the same way, right in my own bed!

ERMA: I always said it would either be her heart or her family.

GERTRUDE: Speaking of her family, do you know who that man is, standing near the corner?

ERMA: No. Who is he?

GERTRUDE: That's her brother, you know, the one who drinks a lot!

ERMA: Oh, yes! He's got a face of a drinker.

GERTRUDE: And look at that young kid with the dirty beard and the long hair. What's he doing here?

ERMA: Gertrude! Don't you recognize him? That's Marge's son. Remember the one that ran off to join that commune?

GERTRUDE: Now that you mention it, I do remember something like that happening a few years ago. Marge never spoke of him too often.

ERMA: Well....would you? Poor Marge.

GERTRUDE: Get a load of her daughter, crying her eyes out. Where was she every night when Marge cried her eyes out? When she married that man twice her age.

ERMA: I don't think she's talked to poor Marge in five years. She must be here to grab Marge's stole and her good string of pearls.

GERTRUDE: Mister Harper hasn't said a word to either of us. He must be very upset. So sudden!

ERMA: Upset! Gertrude, the man must have been jumping cartwheels. Now he can marry that hussey of a secretary he's been keeping the last five years!

GERTRUDE: I wonder if she'd ever have the nerve to show up here.

ERMA: I hardly think so. Everyone but Marge knew about it. Besides, I think the roof of the church might fall in if she walked in.

GERTRUDE: Poor Marge, if she ever knew, would have broken her heart.

ERMA: Well, just be glad Gertrude, that she had good friends like you and I.

by Kevin Maloney

... the next assignment was directed at eliciting a concern for time [from both the characters and the audience]. Following are three interestingly divergent responses:

STORY I

- CHARACTERS: Jessica, mid-twenties, well-educated, practical.
Roberta (Bobby), early twenties, innocent, a bit childish,
Jessica's best friend.
Tommy, mid-twenties, strong, silent type, in love with Jessica.
- SCENE: A large, well-lit, country house in Connecticut. A thunderstorm rages outside.
- BOBBY: (Very excitedly) It's almost twelve.
- JESSICA: (Reading, looks up at the clock) So it is.
- BOBBY: Aren't you worried at all?
- JESSICA: Worried about what?
- BOBBY: You know what!
- JESSICA: It's nonsense and you know it....
- BOBBY: It's not nonsense! Tommy asked "it" if he was going to get a raise and it said yes. A week later, he got the raise. Vickey asked what the initials of her husband would be and "it" said A.C. Now she is engaged to Andrew Courtney.
- JESSICA: Vickey always had a crush on Andy and she probably pushed "it" toward those letters. Tommy's uncle owns the firm where he works, so it doesn't mean anything.
- BOBBY: Even so, if I were you, I'd be scared silly.
- JESSICA: There's nothing to be afraid of. One of you did it as a joke, and a very poor one.
- BOBBY: Who'd do that to you? Everyone likes you. Anyway, I think it's exciting. Especially with the storm. You always see movies where there's a lonely house and a raging storm. The lights are still on, which ruins the atmosphere.

JESSICA: (Angrily) Bobby, stop it! Nothing is going to happen. Let's drop the subject.

(There is a silence. The only sound is the ticking of the clock. The doorbell rings, Jessica and Bobby jump.)

BOBBY: I wonder who that could be.

JESSICA: I'm not expecting anyone.

BOBBY: (Excitedly) Maybe it's the one who's going to do it.

JESSICA: Bobby!

(Bobby opens the door and Tommy comes in.)

TOMMY: Hi, Bobby! Hello, Jessica!

BOBBY: Why are you here?

TOMMY: I just came over to check on you two.

BOBBY: You mean Jessica.

JESSICA: You two are impossible. How can you believe that thing? Who'd want to hurt me?

TOMMY: I don't know, but I want to be here 'til after.

JESSICA: (Starting to get nervous) You're scaring me.

TOMMY: (Trying to calm Jessie and himself) Why don't we just try to relax? Let's play cards or something.

BOBBY: (Worried about Jessica) That's a good idea. I'll get the cards. (Just then, the lights go out. The house is in total darkness.)

TOMMY: We must have blown a fuse. I'll go and check the fusebox.

(Tommy exits.)

Do you have any candles?

BOBBY: There are some in the kitchen.

JESSICA: I'll get them for you. Wait here.

BOBBY: No! You don't know where they are. I'll get them.

JESSICA: (Jessica walks into the kitchen. The clock strikes twelve. There is a scream from Bobby as the curtain closes.)

by Donna Panneton

STORY II

CHARACTERS: Three elderly women: Ellen, Mabel, Frances.
The voice of a public address announcer.

SCENE: The waiting room at a small local bus station. Stage right is a door leading in from the street; stage left is the door to the boarding platform. Mabel and Frances are standing, center, looking anxiously from door to door.

ELLEN: (Entering through platform door) Well, I've put our coats on the two front seats, so we'll be able to sit together when Rose gets here. What have you got in that bag, Mabel? Do you want me to put it on the bus for you?

MABEL: (Nervously shifts a canvas bag from arm to arm and finally puts it down at her feet.) That's all right. It's just a thermos of coffee and some fruit and cookies. I thought it might be nice to have with us. You have to wait so long for lunch, sometimes, on these trips.

FRANCES: (Determinedly) I hate eating on busses . . . all that mess. Scalding yourself with the coffee . . . things getting spilled over everything.

MABEL: Well, I

ELLEN: Whatever has happened to Rose? It's getting late. Are you sure she knows it's today, Mabel?

MABEL: Yes! I called her last night to make sure. Jimmy's going to drop her here on his way to work.

ELLEN: Well, what could have happened to them? The bus will be leaving soon. What shall we do?

(Half a dozen women enter from the street door, hurry across the waiting room and exit onto the platform.)

FRANCES: (Addressing Mabel) Not dependable! You should never have invited somebody not dependable!

MABEL: (With spirit) Well, she's your friend, too. Perhaps the car broke down.

FRANCES: I should have phoned her, myself. Then we'd have got it right in the first place.

MABEL: I suppose we could call now . . .

ELLEN: What good would that do? The bus is leaving in a minute. What shall we do?

(Three women scurry across from the street to the platform. Offstage, the bus is heard, revving up.)

FRANCES: We'll have to go without her.

ANNOUNCER: Country Fair trip to Deerfield, New Hampshire, leaving at ten o'clock. All Aboard!

MABEL: But how can we go without her? It's her birthday treat!

ELLEN: (Exasperated) But she isn't here, Mabel!

FRANCES: (Bends down and snatches up Mabel's canvas bag.) Well, if you're not going, we might as well take this with us. Come on, Ellen.

(Frances and Ellen rush through the platform door. Mabel is left shifting from one foot to the other as she turns from the street door to the platform door.)

MABEL: (Half crying) Oh, dear! I don't know what to do!

by Gladys Fish

STORY III

SETTING: The reception desk in a motel in Montbasaland in the mountainous southwestern section of New Mexico. It is midnight and the clerk is waiting up for three guests coming from New York City. He is conversing with the owner who is about to turn in for the night.

CLERK: What time can we expect them?

OWNER: Cy Brown left to meet the 12:15 plane. Looks like they'll be along about twelve-thirty.

CLERK: What do ya know about these New Yorkers?

OWNER: All I know is they've been discharged from the Bronx Area Hospital in New York City. Man named Nicholson suffers from lung damage, and during his hospital stay, he met these other two who suffer from the same ailment. When Nicholson's doctor recommended this climate to recuperate in, the others decided to come along. Names are Rappaport and Primak. Now you know as much as I do.

(The clerk sees the lights of the taxi through the window, and counts out three reservation cards onto the desk as the taxi pulls up out front. The three enter followed shortly by Cy who is carrying their luggage.)

CLERK: Good evening. Nice to have you here.

PRIMAK: Thanks. Hope you have hot water.

CLERK: Sure have! And everything's ready for you.

(The three sign in. The clerk and Cy lead the guests upstairs. On the way back down, they speak.)

CY: What do you know about those three?

CLERK: They're here to recuperate after a hospital stay in New York. They became acquainted in the hospital and decided to come here together.

CY: They didn't know one another before their hospital stay?

CLERK: That's what I understand.

CY: Well, don't bet on it.

CLERK: What are ya driving at.

CY: Well, since the selectmen here passed the law that the passenger and the driver's side of public cars must be partitioned off by glass, I've had trouble, at times, hearing riders talk to me. So, I wired a "mike" under the rear seat and hooked it to a speaker over my head on the driver's side. At the airport when this Mister Nicholson left to make a phone call, I learned from parts of a conversation that he's a wealthy investment broker. I don't know what the other two do for a living, but they didn't just get to know one another in the hospital. I guarantee you that! Tomorrow I'll be over here right after lunch and I bet I'll be able to fill you in on a lot more about these three.

(The clerk walks Cy to the door, then watches as the tail lights fade in the distance.)

by Jim Rae

. . . the class responded to the fourth assignment with some very creative and entertaining writing. The students were to produce a scene using the fewest words possible. Read on . . .

STORY I

SETTING: A neighborhood bar . . . late afternoon . . . late November. One man is seated at the bar; another enters, sits down and orders.

JACK: Beer. (The bartender serves him, is paid, and leaves.) Damned expensive!

VITO: What?

JACK: The beer.

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: New in town?

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: Thought so.

VITO: What?

JACK: Live six houses down.

VITO: Oh!

(They drink in silence for awhile.)

JACK: Cold.

VITO: What?

JACK: Outside.

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: Damned expensive.

VITO: What?

JACK: Heating oil.

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: Lousy Arabs.

VITO: Yeah.

(They drink some more.)

JACK: New car.

VITO: What?

JACK: Vette.

VITO: Nice.

JACK: Damned expensive.

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: Inflation.

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: Government.

VITO: What?

JACK: Causes it.

VITO: Yeah.

JACK: Arabs, too.

VITO: Why?

JACK: Oil.

VITO: Oh! Yeah.

(They drink some more.)

JACK: Can't blame me.

VITO: What?

JACK: Not my fault.

VITO: Why?

JACK: Didn't vote.

VITO: Is.

JACK: Is what?

VITO: Your fault.

JACK: How come?

VITO: Should've.

JACK: What?

VITO: Voted.

JACK: Why?

VITO: Someone better.

JACK: Wasn't anyone.

VITO: Anyone what?

JACK: Better.

VITO: Oh.

JACK: Never is.

(They drink some more)

VITO: You.

JACK: Me?

VITO: Run.

JACK: Where?

VITO: For office.

JACK: Can't.

VITO: Why?

JACK: Nobody votes.

VITO: Oh.

(They slide gently off their stools as the lights fade.)

by Steve Kehoe

STORY II

SETTING: The recreation area in a nursing home. A woman sits, rocking.

MRS. ADAMS: (Walking in) Good morning!

MRS. BLOOM: Thank you.

MRS. ADAMS: (Sitting down) Nice day.
MRS. BLOOM: What?
MRS. ADAMS: (Articulating carefully) Nice . . . day.
MRS. BLOOM: (Shrugging shoulders) Fair.
MRS. ADAMS: (Smiling) For me . . . nice.
MRS. BLOOM: Why?
MRS. ADAMS: It's Sunday . . . Sun-day!!
MRS. BLOOM: So!
MRS. ADAMS: My son . . . is coming.
MRS. BLOOM: Who?
MRS. ADAMS: My son . . . the **doctor**.
MRS. BLOOM: Oh.
MRS. ADAMS: Never misses a week!
MRS. BLOOM: My son . . . Attorney Bloom . . . can't come today.
MRS. ADAMS: Too bad.
MRS. BLOOM: He's very busy . . . **very!**
MRS. ADAMS: Next week . . . want to walk?
MRS. BLOOM: My feet . . . I'm tired.
MRS. ADAMS: I'll help.
MRS. BLOOM: Huh??
MRS. ADAMS: I'll . . . help . . . you!
MRS. BLOOM: Good . . . go to tea.
MRS. ADAMS: Four grandchildren . . . you have grandchildren?

by Ann Young

STORY III

SETTING: A bare stage, except for a park bench, center. A female walks on from the right, carrying a lunch bag. She sits, looks around, and begins to eat. A moment later, a male walks on from the left with a lunch bag. He, too, sits and begins eating. They look at each other and smile.

FEMALE: I love you.

MALE: (No response.)

FEMALE: I said I love you.

MALE: I heard.

FEMALE: Well . . . ?

MALE: Well what?

FEMALE: I love you.

MALE: Uh huh.

FEMALE: Uh huh?

MALE: What?

FEMALE: What!

MALE: (No response.)

FEMALE: Don't you love me?

MALE: (Nods yes.)

FEMALE: Can't you say it?

MALE: Say what?

FEMALE: I love you!

MALE: Oh?!

FEMALE: Animal!

MALE: What?

FEMALE: Beast!

MALE: Who?

FEMALE: (Screaming) I-yi-yih . . . Why me?

(Pause.)

MALE: (Softly spoken) I love you.
FEMALE: (No response.)
MALE: Didn't you hear me?
FEMALE: What?
MALE: What!
FEMALE: Hear what??
MALE: I said I love you.
FEMALE: Oh?
MALE: Don't you love me?
FEMALE: (Nods yes.)
MALE: Can't you say it?
FEMALE: Say what?
MALE: I love you.
FEMALE: Un huh.
MALE: Well . . . ?
FEMALE: Well what?
MALE: Say it.
FEMALE: Say what?
MALE: (No response.)
FEMALE: I love you.
MALE: What?
FEMALE: I love you.
MALE: I love you.
FEMALE: I'm so happy.
MALE: So am I!
FEMALE: Are you?
MALE: Yes.
FEMALE: I love you.
MALE: (Looks at watch, stuffs garbage into bag, gets up, and walks a few steps away, then turns.) See you same time next week.
FEMALE: (Smiles.)

by Tom Vittorioso

STORY IV

Pete enters a crowded diner and sits on a stool at the counter. Sally, standing with her tray, surveys the scene and sees the only empty seat is next to Pete.

SALLY: Taken?

PETE: (Looking up from his plate) Pardon?

SALLY: (Pointing at stool) Empty?

PETE: Yes.

SALLY: Mind?

PETE: No.

(Sally starts eating while looking at Pete and trying to think of something to say.)

SALLY: (Looking around) Crowded.

PETE: Yes.

SALLY: (Holding her hand out to Pete) Sally.

PETE: (Taking her hand and shaking it) Pete.

SALLY: Lowell.

PETE: Methuen.

SALLY: Businessman?

PETE: Salesman.

SALLY: Line?

PETE: Insurance.

SALLY: Interesting.

PETE: You?

SALLY: Librarian.

PETE: Hobbies?

SALLY: Music.

PETE: Chamber?

SALLY: Disco.

PETE: Others?
SALLY: Theatre.
PETE: Really?
SALLY: Yes.
PETE: Fascinating.
SALLY: You?
PETE: Racing.
SALLY: Cars?
PETE: Horses.
SALLY: Married?
PETE: Divorced.
SALLY: Sorry.
PETE: You?
SALLY: Yes.
PETE: Children?
SALLY: Two.
PETE: Boys?
SALLY: Girls.
PETE: Nice.
SALLY: You?
PETE: What?
SALLY: Children?
PETE: One.
SALLY: Girl?
PETE: Boy.
SALLY: Nice.
PETE: Happy?
SALLY: Yes.
PETE: Really?
SALLY: Yes.
PETE: Truly?

SALLY: No.

PETE: Why?

SALLY: Bored.

PETE: Affair.

SALLY: (Shocked) What?

PETE: Affair.

SALLY: You?

PETE: Me.

SALLY: (Unconvincingly) Couldn't.

PETE: (Dejectedly) Oh.

SALLY: Could.

PETE: Oh!

SALLY: Couldn't.

PETE: Why?

SALLY: Children.

PETE: True.

(Silence. They try not to look at each other while they resume eating. Sally looks at her watch.)

SALLY: Late.

PETE: (Looking at his watch) Yes.

SALLY: Goodbye.

PETE: Bye.

(Sally leaves. Pete watches her leave and then continues eating.)

by Donna Panneton

. In the final assignment, the students were to write a one-act play. While the editors were impressed with the well-thought-out and well-written pieces of several of the students, space allows the inclusion of only one of these plays. Following is the copyrighted play by Gladys Fish

REAL VALUE

CHARACTERS:

Ann Middleton, forty, partner in a real estate business with Bill Steves, also forty.

Tom Bonner, about forty.

Madeline Bonner, wife to Tom and ten years his junior.

Hiram P. Potter, a con man.

SCENE ONE

SETTING: A real estate office. Ann Middleton is busy at her desk. There is a knock at the door.

POTTER: Good morning, dear lady. (He removes his Panama hat, flourishing it as he bows.) Hiram P. Potter, at your service. (Advancing) Here only for the purpose of doing you a good turn.

ANN: Mister Potter, good morning.
(They shake hands across the desk.)

POTTER: (Indicating the chair opposite Ann's desk) May I?

ANN: I really have very little time this morning, Mister Potter.

POTTER: (Sitting) Thank you, dear lady You will wonder how a stranger can come in off the street and give you some advice that will turn your life around. (Chuckles) Ah, but I'm not a stranger. No indeed, I have been studying your business for some time and I can assure you that you have a potential goldmine here in the real estate line.

ANN: I've been doing quite well here for the past fifteen years, Mister Potter.

POTTER: Ah, but you don't know what you're missing. You could build this place up into something really big, dear lady. Your little business has great potential great potential. I'm thinking of a profit of a half-million a year, to start with. What do you say to that?

ANN: (Coldly) My business is my own concern, thank you, Mister Potter. I have just one partner and I have no intention of expanding.

POTTER: Ah, but you need new blood a live wire. . . . someone to go right out and pull in the business for you. I would like to be that person, dear lady. With my experience, I could do that for you. Together with my experience and your charm we could corner the market in this area. All those old estates along the river. D'you ever think of them? Goldmines, all of them, dear lady. Goldmines! What d'you say to that, now? Let's talk about it, shall we?

(Mister Potter places his hat on the floor, next to his chair, folds his arms, and places his crossed ankles upon Ann's desk. She rises.)

ANN: (Icily) Please take your feet off my desk, Mister Potter. I cannot imagine a situation in which I could conceivably require your services, now or ever. Thank you, Mister Potter, and good-bye.

(Smiling broadly, Mister Potter picks up his hat and stands up.)

POTTER: We won't say goodbye, dear lady. I'll drop in again when you've had time to think about my suggestion.

ANN: Goodbye, Mister Potter.

(Potter goes to the door, bows with a flourish and leaves. Ann sinks down and draws a hand across her brow. Bill comes into the office removing his coat. He drops into a chair and puts his feet up on Ann's desk.)

BILL: Hi, Ann. How's tricks?

ANN: Morning, Bill. Oh, it's the usual Monday morning madhouse. You should have seen the weirdo who was just in here. It takes all kinds! There're a couple of sales that I hope will go through today, so I came in early to look over the papers again GET THOSE FEET OFF MY DESK!!

BILL: (Groaning as he lowers his feet) Got your dragon suit on today, have you? God, what a head I've got. What a weekend! One of Bess' old man's famous parties at their place on the river. Never stopped from Saturday morning 'til Sunday night. I don't know how the old man does it.

ANN: With all his money, I guess he doesn't have to get up Monday morning, like the rest of us working stiffs.

BILL: Thank God there's nothing much on my desk this morning. Gotta see the lawyer on the Smith job at eleven. Hope I'm awake by then. (He goes to the coffee pot and pours himself a cup.) Who've you got lined up for today?

ANN: That newly wed couple finally got a bank to go along with them on that place on Main Street. I have to see them this morning.

BILL: Who else?

ANN: This afternoon, I'm seeing Tom Bonner. He and Madeline are taking over the old Walder estate on Front Street. I'm glad to see Tom get ahead nice guy. I used to go out with him in high school.

- BILL: Bonner Bonner where did I hear that name? My God, he's the fellow who got canned last Friday. The old man told me about it over the weekend. Expected big things of him, but he hadn't brought in his quota this year.
- ANN: You're telling me Tom didn't do his **job**? That's ridiculous. I know him better than that. Conscientious is his middle name.
- BILL: The old man's pretty ruthless, you know. Wanted me to go in with him when I married Bess, but that was a bit too close for comfort, so I came in with you, instead. Bess will inherit the factory some day, and I'll have to take over then.
- ANN: So, poor Tom's lost his job. I think it's worth checking into, Bill. If you could have a word with your father-in-law, perhaps there's a mistake in the records. I can't believe Tom would fall down like that.
- BILL: Okay. I'll do that. I don't see how Tom can handle a new house, the way things are.
(A man opens the door and enters while knocking on the opened door.)
- ANN: (Looking up and smiling) Oh, hello. Good morning, Tom. Come on in. Do you know Bill Steves? This is Tom Bonner, Bill.
(The men grunt good mornings and shake hands.)
- BILL: (Picking up his coat and heading for his office) See you later, Ann. (He exits.)
- TOM: Bill Steves. So. . . I guess the news has reached you already.
- ANN: (Blushing) He's only just mentioned it, Tom. I'm so sorry about your job. Is it going to affect your purchase?
- TOM: (Laughing bitterly) I guess so! It was going to be a hard enough pull as it was, but Madeline wanted the place so much I thought I could swing it. But now (He shakes his head.)
- ANN: Tom, don't worry about it. I'll handle it for you. Luckily . . . nothing's been signed yet. You just took an option. I'll try to get some of that payment back for you.
- TOM: Thanks, Ann that would help. I haven't told Madeline yet. I want to tell her tonight before she hears about it from someone else. I . . . I don't know how to tell her.
- ANN: It's all right about the house, Tom. And don't worry you'll get something else a better job. I'm sure you will.

TOM: You're a good friend, Ann. I could always count on you.

(Tom leaves. Bill reenters.)

ANN: Sad, isn't it? His wife will be so disappointed, too.

BILL: She's a bit of a climber, I hear. It's tough luck, but it's a good thing he hadn't taken over the Walker place already. Then he'd really be in a hole.

ANN: Yes, I guess there are always small blessings. I'll go over there tomorrow and put the signs back up. We'll have to start advertising the property again.

Yeah. Well, see you later.

BILL: (Ann lifts her hand in response as Bill exits. She sits at her desk shaking her head as the curtain falls.)

SCENE TWO

SETTING: A large empty room with French windows and a fireplace. Tom's wife, Madeline, is on a ladder measuring walls. The door opens and Ann enters. Both women appear startled.

ANN: Hello, Madeline. I didn't expect you.

MADELINE: Hello, Ann. Tom gave me the key weeks ago. I keep looking in and planning things. It's such a lovely house, isn't it? I'm so thrilled about living here after that poky little house we've been in for so long.

ANN: (Slowly) That's . . . that's a darling little house. You've made it so attractive. Won't you be sorry to leave?

MADELINE: (Sounding self-satisfied) Yes, well, we've grown into a larger establishment by now. Tom will have room for an office here. It's so important for a man to have his own space at home, don't you think?

ANN: (Sharply) It's important for a man not to have to worry about keeping up with the Joneses.

MADELINE: (Indignantly) No such thing! We have to keep up with Tom's position and have a better place for the children to grow up in.

ANN: Oh, don't, Madeline. I'm sorry. It's just that I always liked that small, cozy house of yours. It seemed perfect for you.

MADELINE: One would think you didn't want us to have this house. Won't you wish us luck, Ann?

ANN: I do, Madeline, I do. I want you and Tom to be happy.

MADELINE: (Excitedly) I've seen the most beautiful French wallpaper for this room. It could really be a showplace, with the windows opening out into the garden.

ANN: Yes, I suppose it could.

MADELINE: And the master bedroom is terrific. One whole wall is windows. We'll have the bed facing it, overlooking the river.

ANN: It sounds beautiful.

MADELINE: I suppose we'll be passing the papers any day now, won't we, Ann? Has it gone that far yet?

ANN: I guess it's gone far enough.

(They turn as the door opens and Tom enter.)

MADELINE: Tom, darling! I'm so glad you came! I was just telling Ann about our plans for decorating the house.

TOM: (Looking from Madeline to Ann) Yes, I know. (He pulls the door open and steps aside, speaking to Ann) You see how it is, Ann. I'm sorry. I must talk to Madeline alone now.

(The curtain falls.)

SCENE THREE

SETTING: The same empty room. Ann is placing a sign in the window. A "For Sale" sign lies on the floor. She picks it up and looks at it. The door opens and Tom enters.

TOM: I hoped I'd find you here.

ANN: Hello, Tom. (Put's down sign) Well, how did it go? Did you manage to tell Madeline last night?

TOM: Oh, Lord, Ann. I feel like such a heel, letting you in for that scene yesterday, then having to tell my wife that I can't afford the roof over her head.

ANN: Come on, Tom. You've done all right up to now. Nobody gets by in this world without a few knocks occasionally. This is just a temporary setback.

TOM: I'm older now . . . older and wiser.

ANN: Not wiser. You never used to let yourself get down in the dumps so easily. What I used to like best about you was your cheerful, happy-go-lucky nature.

TOM: Those were the days. I didn't know how lucky I was. You were always such a good sport, making the best of everything, never asking more than I could give you.

(Tom puts his arms around Ann and buries his face on her shoulder. She holds him a moment and pats his shoulder soothingly. Neither notice that the door has opened and the Madeline is standing there.)

ANN: Come on, Tom. We can't turn back the clock.

(An outer door slams and Ann and Tom look around as Bill comes noisily in, joining Madeline.)

BILL: Hi folks. Found your note on the door, Ann, and Madeline was roaming around outside so we came to join you. Good to see you, Tom. God, I've just been knocked for a loop.

ANN: Where were you, Bill? You didn't call in, and I couldn't reach you or Bess at home. Is anything wrong?

BILL: I'll say there is. Plenty. Bess' old man had a stroke last night. We've been all this time at the hospital. I only just now went home and had a shower.

(There is a chorus of sympathy from the other three.)

BILL: Yes, it's quite a blow. It'll make a big change for me, Ann. When he came out of it, all he could think of was the business. Kept saying that I must take over. I knew it would come to that some day but I didn't expect it to happen like this.

MADELINE: I suppose there's a chance he may be able to go back some day, isn't there?

BILL: I hope so, but he'll never be able to handle it on his own, again. No, I guess I'm in for it, and it looks as though this will be the end of our partnership, Ann. I hate to say it, but I'll have to get over there as soon as I can. Of course, I'll spend some time with you getting things squared away, but I'm needed desperately at the factory now.

ANN: (Slowly) Yes, of course. I understand. It will mean a big change for me, too. I shall miss you, Bill. We worked well together.

BILL: It's rotten luck. The good news is that I had a chance to run your records through the computer, Tom, and I found that you'd more than met your yearly quota.

MADELINE: Oh, Tom!

ANN: I knew it!

BILL: When I told the old man, he asked me to apologize for him and ask if you'd be willing to come back with a raise in pay.

MADELINE: Oh, Tom. That's wonderful!

BILL: I don't feel much like breaking in new people when I've got so much to learn, myself. What do you say, old man?

TOM: It's a lifesaver for me, Bill. I won't pretend anything else. How about it, Madeline? Looks as though our troubles are over.

(Bill and Ann talk quietly together.)

MADELINE: I'm so glad for you, Tom. I was worried about you.

TOM: I thought it was the house you were worried about. Hey, we'll be able to get it back, now. Let's talk to Ann.

MADELINE: No. Tom. I don't want it, any more. I just want to stay in our own little house where I feel secure. I'm satisfied with what I've got and I intend to keep it . . . always.

(Madeline lays a hand on Tom's arm and looks challengingly at Ann.)

ANN: I think you're doing the right thing, Madeline, and I'm glad it turned out this way for you both.

(Madeline and Tom move toward the door, his arm around her.)

BILL: Well, I'd better get over to the plant and calm things down. I'll do my best to get in for awhile, tomorrow, Ann. You haven't seen the last of me.

ANN: I know, Bill, but I dread the thought of looking for another partner.
(Bill and Ann shake hands, lingeringly. Meanwhile, the door has opened and Mister Potter enters, all smiles and flourishes. He pauses at stage center. Madeline and Tom go out. Bill looks back, hesitantly, then shrugs and walks out.)

POTTER: Good afternoon, dear lady.

ANN: (Drearily) Mister Potter.

POTTER: I saw the note on your office door and it drew me like a magnet like a cry for help, you might say.

ANN: I don't need your help, Mister Potter.

POTTER: I hear your partner is leaving you. Too bad too bad but how often good things come in disguise. Now, dear lady, you are free to discuss the matter we spoke of, the other day.

ANN: There's nothing to discuss.

POTTER: Oh, but I think there is. In time, you'll see it my way.
(He darts to the window and looks out.)

POTTER: Yes, that area will be quite adequate for a hot-topped parking lot.

ANN: Mister Potter!

POTTER: We'll have this window removed and a ramp built here for wheelchairs. An elevator, **here**, I think.

ANN: Mister Potter!

POTTER: Beyond that wall, we'll put in a small private chapel. We'll need a resident doctor and nurse, and possible a resident chaplain.

ANN: Mister Potter, please!

POTTER: Perhaps, in time, dear lady, you yourself will feel disposed to reside here and take charge would make a nice fourth for bridge.
(Ann has turned to face the audience, head thrown back. Her arms are outstretched as though seeking Divine guidance. Mister Potter's voice drones on as the curtain falls.)

by Gladys Fish

